KENNEDY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ASSASSINATIONS

Name Samuel Stern Date 8/22/78 Time

Address Wilmer, Cutler, & Pickering Place his law office

D.C.

Interview:

Former Warren Commission counsel Sam Stern was interviewed in his Washingt law office on August 22, 1978. Mr. Stern stated that his duties on the Commission involved handling the investigation into Lee Oswald's backgrou specifically, the intelligence agencies awareness of Oswald prior to the assassination. Secondly, Stern stated that he had been in charge of evalua "the efficacy of Presidential protection," as well as preparing a history American Presidential assassinations.

Mr. Stern stated that "at the outset we realized that there was no possibl way to penetrate any offcial involvement in a cover-up or conspiracy if there was such complicity." Stern stated that he and several of his Commi colleagues discussed what they regarded as "the fact that the agencies - t FBI and CIA - could formulate and maintain a cover-up which no one would ever penetrate. We of course did not believe that was so. And I still don't. But we realized what we were dealing with, in the power of these agencies. Fortunately, we believed they were on our side."

Mr. Stern stated that on one occasion he believed that the Commission was influenced in its investigation by what he regarded as "some type of pressure or fear of the FBI." Stern stated thatthis came about when he prepared a detailed letter to be sent to the FBI setting forth detailed questions about their past investigation and contacts with Lee Oswald. Stern stated that Earl Warren told him that the letter was too demanding and that it would cause problems vis a vis the Commission's relationship with Hoover. Stern stated that upon being told that the letter was "unacceptable" by Warren, he (Stern) met with John McCloy and explained the situation to him, hoping to gain his support. While McCloy did express agreement with Stern that the letter was necessary, Stern was once again told by Warren that "the letter went further than was desirable." Stern thereupon sent a less detailed request

In connection with this episode, Stern stated that "one of my problems, a real difficulty, was having such limited contact with the Members of the Commission. It was all done through Rankin. And you never really knew if your viewpoint or arguments or whatever were being communicated

Interviewer Signature Mike Ewing

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Speaking of the possibility of various Members of the Commission leaking information to the agencies or other people, Stern stated that "I always assumed Dulles was doing that - to the CIA. But I had no hard information." Stern stated that the FBI had a "pretty good idea" of what the Commission was doing "because Malley was there to ingratiate himself as much as possible with each of us."

Stern stated that among his closest colleagues on the staff, they were convinced that Albert Jenner was frequently leaking material to the press. Stern stated that at one point Jenner was more or less "caught" leaking something, and made "a partial confession." Stern stated that he and some of his colleagues made up a song about Jenner leaking information to the press when he would have lunch with various reporters. Stern stated that he can remember that it started out as follows: "Down at the tables of Hogate's where old Jenner dwells."

Stern stated that he had no knowledge that the FBI prepared secret dossiers on the members of the Commission, and stated that "I'll have to put in an FOI request for mine and see what they had on me."

Stern stated that he had been seriously misquoted by Edward Epstein in his book, "Inquest", and that he had complained to Epstein's editor that Epstein had misrepresented his credentials during the preparation of the book.

In response to the question as to how he now feels about the conclusions of the Warren Commission, Stern stated, "I am less certain now than at the time we wrote the Report. Less certain that Oswald acted alone. Actually, I wasn't all that certain at the time. I thought the best evidence supported the final findings, and I agreed with them, but I wasn't tremendously firm or immovable in that, in my own mind. I just thought there were a lot of straws left."

Stern stated that "I accepted the forensics, the rifle, the bullets, Tippit, and everything, but I hadn't been involved in the hard physical evidence at all." Stern also stated that he would have liked to see "a new head of the Secret Service when the Report came out. I just didn't think Rowley was up to the job at all." Stern further noted that "after the assassination, the coffers really opened up for the Secret Service and they finally got the money they wanted."

Stern concluded by stating that he has become "more skeptical about the Warren Commission findings and everything else that is a part of official life, I suppose. Everything has become discredited over the years since 1963. You don't really believe in things the way you did back then. You've seen the Vice President of the United States taking cash bribes in his office and on and on and on. You couldn't help but rely on government officials more then than you would now."